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The Mystery of Godliness :

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SERMON

Preached before

Her MAJESTY,

At St. JAMES's Chapel,

On Sunday, Dec. 9th. 1705.

BY

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LANCELOT BLACKBURN,

Dean of Exeter, and Chaplain in Ordinary to
Her MAJESTY.

By Her Majesties Special Command.

L O N D O N :

Printed for Tho. Bennet, at the Half-Moon in St. Pauls
Church-yard, 1705.

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QUEEN.

1 TIM. iii. 16.

Without Controversie, great is the Mystery
 of Godliness: God was manifest in the
 Flesh.

Mystery and Godliness, are two very shocking
 things to the Natural Man's unsanctified
 Reason and Passions; yet require no
 more (with the Grace of God) to the gaining free
 and full Admittance into an Honest Mind, than to
 have their Meaning well and clearly understood.

Now, by Godliness, in this place, is meant, in
 General, the whole Oeconomy of the Gospel; the
 Means and Method of the Salvation of Mankind.

This is what the Holy Apostle, wrapp'd up in an ecstasical Contemplation of the Infinite Wisdom and Goodness of Almighty God, shining through the Exquisite Contrivance of our Redemption, pronounces to be, *without Controversie, a great Mystery!* a Word which in Holy Scripture has three several Meanings.

1. It signifies something Great and Lofty in itself, inaccessible to Human Reason unassisted, and no way throughly penetrable by it, yet worthy of a serious and deep Meditation. Thus the *Doctrine of the Trinity, the Providence of God, and his Eternal Decrees*, are great Mysteries, and very properly so call'd.

2. It signifies somewhat hidden under a Veil, where what we see, seemingly inconsiderable in itself, leads us to the Understanding of some other thing which is invisible; and which yet deserves our utmost Admiration. Thus all the *Figures of the Old Testament, the Manna, the Wilderness, the Passage over Jordan, and the Land of Canaan*, are call'd Mysteries; because, under the Veil of these Visible and Corporeal Things, God cover'd the Wonders of his Grace in Christ Jesus.

3. It signifies an hidden Design lay'd at a great Distance, and advancing by slow and imperceptible Degrees, till like a Mine carry'd on to its full Length, it breaks out at last, and makes a Noise in the World, with its projected Execution. In all these

these Senses the whole Economy of the Gospel, and more eminently the Incarnation of the Son of God for the Redemption of Mankind (which is the Principle on which the whole depends) is a great Mystery.

The thing itself is wholly undiscovetable by Natural Reason.

It was reveal'd indeed to the Patriarchs, and under the Law, and so the Object of Their Faith, as well as Ours; but yet reveal'd so darkly, as to remain in great Measure a Mystery to them still notwithstanding the Revelation grew clearer and clearer, as it drew near to its Accomplishment.

It was, at length, revealed plainly by our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles, when the substance of it came, as to the Fact; but yet so, as it remains a great Mystery still, as to the Manner of it.

And Lastly, to apply all to our own Informations, the thing not being discovetable by Natural Reason, nor the Darkness of the Revelation of the First Ages, nor the remaining Mystery as to the Manner of it, are Objections to its Credibility in any Weights; now the Thing itself is so fully and authentically reveal'd.

That God should take Flesh upon him for the Redemption of Mankind is a great Mystery; the Thing itself is wholly undiscovetable by Natural Reason.

That Man, by the Employment of his Natural Faculties in meditating on the Works of Nature

and

and his own Being, may discover much of the infinite Perfections of his Maker, and of his own Duty, is acknowledg'd by all who have us'd those Faculties Honestly and Impartially. That he is a Creature endu'd with the Power of Choice, and therefore accountable for the Use of it; subject, on this Score, to Rewards or Punishments attending such an Account; nor call'd to it fully in this Life, and capable of giving it in another. That his own Reason is a Law to him in those Actions for which he is accountable, and the Rectitude of em, is in general, discoverable from the unalterable Differences of Good and Evil, find in the very Nature of the Things themselves. These are Truths which depend not on intricate and far-fetch'd Consequences, but have an obvious and evident Connection with one another.

But now when Reason has made these Discoveries to Mens Minds, how uncomfortable is the Prospect which Experience adds to em? Every Man, in short, has departed from his Rule; every Man has transgressed; every Man is criminal.

In this Condition, the Man who attends to it, cannot but conclude himself out of the way to Happiness, under the Displeasure of his Judge, for transgressing his Laws, and highly concern'd to find out some means of appeasing an Indignation, which otherwise must unavoidably be fatal to him.

But

But

But where alas! can he fix his Enquiries? the Consideration of his own Nature will not help him in the Search: His Deviations from that Rule are too Manifest to be deny'd, and too Gross to be palliated: They are out of his reach, and cannot be recall'd; they have gotten such Possession of his Inclinations, that he cannot be secur'd against 'em for the Time to come; nor wou'd this quiet him if he cou'd: Both his past and his future Actions must be equally accounted for; and the Goodness of the one will by no means satisfy for the Obliquity of the other.

The Consideration of God's Justice, which drives him to the Enquiry, will be one of the likeliest Reflections to discourage him in it. For Justice is a natural and necessary Attribute in the Divinity; so Essential to God, that we can have no Conception of him without it; and therefore impossible to be dispens'd with, but at the same time, he must do Violence to his own Being. 'Tis a Love of Holiness, with a Resolution of rewarding it; 'tis an Hatred of Sin, with a Resolution of punishing it. These are the natural Consequences of his infinite Purity, which he cannot violate without denying Himself: And that's a Supposition too Impious for Reason ever to lead us to.

This necessary Relation then between Sin and Punishment, being founded immediately in the Divine Justice, must appear to Reason as immutable

as its Foundation: For 'tis as inconsistent with infinite Justice that Sin shou'd go unpunish'd, as it is with the Nature of God that he shou'd cease to be Just.

God indeed consider'd simply as the Maker of the World, can receive no Damage nor Injury at our Hands. Our Goodness extends not to Him, as the *Psalmist* speaks; nor can our Wickedness approach to hurt Him. In Relation to his External Glory we may outrageously offend him; but he has no need of that External Glory, and can be without it, as he was so before the Creation of the World, retir'd within the unapproachable Recesses of his own Being, infinitely Happy and Self-sufficient, and wou'd be so still, tho' all Creatures were reduc'd to nothing. Consider'd only as the Party Offended, He is absolute Master of his own Rights, and may release the Reparation which Man knows not how to make him, for the Offences which he has committed.

But in the Remissions of those Punishments, which Sin gives us Just Apprehensions of, God is to be consider'd as the Legislator and Judge, as the Governour of the World, a Relation, tho' arising from the former, yet added to it, and inducing the same Necessity and Immutability in the Exercise of it's Powers, from the Essential Attributes of the Divine Nature, which is Originally rooted in those Attributes themselves.

Now God being the Sovereign Governour of the

the World, His Essential Holiness requires that He condemn Sin as contrary to his Nature ; as Judge, he necessarily decrees its Punishment ; as Almighty, he necessarily Executes that Decree. Not that any Necessity can be impos'd upon God by any thing from without him ; far be so impious a Thought from us ! but the Necessity arises from his own Nature, and is the infinite Perfection of it, *He is what He is* : Is, by his very Nature, what he is, and never can be what he is not.

But if the Justice of God appear thus dreadful to our most impartial Reason ; the Mind of sinful Man, uneasy under its Just Fears, will naturally turn it self to some more comfortable Attribute, ransack all the Treasures of his infinite Perfections, to find, if possible, some more hopeful Expectations ; to escape, if it may any way be, his most affrighting Indignation.

Now, among all the Perfections of the Divine Nature, there is no one Man would more eagerly lay hold on than his Mercy and Goodness ; no one is more necessary to him in his Degenerate State, no one can afford him more comfortable Hopes. Goodness is inseparable from a Being infinitely perfect, and God bath not left himself without Witness of it, even to natural Light, in that he doeth good, and giveth us Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seasons, filling our Hearts with Food and Gladness.

Yet still the Hopes of sinful Man advance but

slowly; nor can he possibly fix on any Rational Grounds from the Light of Nature, that can offer at any certainty of Pardon, even from this most promising Perfection of his dreaded Judge.

For can we conceive God's Mercy and Goodness would incline him to pardon Impenitent Sinners? this were to set up a Propriety in God, which would be in direct Opposition to his Holiness and Justice; to establish in him an Indifferency for the Observation or Breach of his Laws, and such a State of Neutrality between Virtue and Vice, as would be an utter Contradiction to the Notion of a God; would defeat all those Reasons which we have in Nature, to conclude there is such a Being in the World, and make all Endeavours to please him Superfluous and Insignificant.

Can we say that Repentance and Amendment of Life is a sufficient Satisfaction for the Breach of God's Laws? That the Sinner's condemning his past Deeds and Himself, and return to his Duty, is a publick Reparation for with-holding that Homage which was due to God's *Holiness* and *Justice*? Nothing less.

For, not to question now the Possibility of the Supposition itself, whether Repentance (being the Gift of God, and, itself, supposing a new Covenant founded on a preceeding Satisfaction for the Breach of the old one) be attainable by any Natural Means; still, what Reparation is Repentance

for

for the Affront done to God's Laws, and that Eternal Rule of Holiness which is violated by the Breach of em? The utmost of Natural Duty that Repentance can produce, is no more than Man was bound to before his Transgression: and the Punishment of that Outrage will still be necessary and essential to the very Nature and Office of the Supreme Judge and Governour of the World.

What shall we say then? Is the Goodness of God of none Effect? Is it an idle and useless Property in the Divinity? What is it to us that God is infinitely Good and Merciful, if his Hands are so ty'd up by his Holiness and Justice, that we can never be the better for it? In his Government of the World, even the greatest Transgressors are not without many sensible Effects of his Goodness to em; *He causeth the Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good; and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust*: and can we know God to be so Good as he is to Men in this Life, and yet believe he will entirely decline the making any Advances towards the inviting em to fresh Means and Conditions of their Happiness in another? 'Tis hard to conceive that the Wisdom of God, to whom the Nature of all Things, with their several Relations and Proportions, are intimately present and open from all Eternity, should not find some way, though the Wit of Man cannot, to prevent the inevitable Destruction of his Creatures; to satisfy his Justice

the entire Ruin of all his Subjects ; to offer them fresh Terms, tho' they have broken all the old ones ; and to put it, once more, to their Choice, whether they will be Happy or Miserable.

If there can be room for such a Transaction between God and his Creatures ; to make it useful to 'em, 'tis necessary it be reveal'd ; and to make it useful to all successive Ages of Men, 'tis necessary that Revelation be continu'd through 'em. For the Redemption of Mankind forfeited to God's Justice, is wholly unattainable by any Natural Powers, and therefore utterly undiscoverable by any Natural Light: a Gift depending freely on the good Pleasure of God, and for that Reason not capable of being manifested, but by him alone. So that the utmost which Natural Reason can do in this Case, is to lead us towards a Discovery which its own Faculties cannot reach ; to direct us to that Revelation of the Will of God, which gives the fairest Evidence of its proceeding from him, and the fullest Manifestation of this wonderful Providence, which was so much a Mystery to us, and so absolutely necessary to our Happiness.

Now, among all the Pretences to Divine Revelation, no one is capable of Competition with the Holy Scriptures ; which alone afford us any just Account of the Corruption of Man's Nature, or any possible means of its Recovery ; and declare the astonishing Condescension of the Son of God, in taking

taking our Nature upon him to make up, by the Dignity of his Person, and the Weight of his Sufferings, a full, perfect, entire and sufficient Satisfaction to infinite Justice for the Sins of the whole World.

The Original Transgression of the Father of us all, and the Depravation of our Nature in and through him; the Consequent Doom of Mankind to everlasting Misery, and the Intervention of a Redeemer for our Rescue from it, are so much the Business of these Holy Writings, that, without any regard to the Systems of Divines so commonly slighted and expos'd in these sort of Enquiries, a very ordinary Attention cannot fail in the Discovery.

'Tis true indeed, before the coming of our Saviour, the Revelation concerning him, seems to have been dark in many parts of it, and to have advanc'd by slow Degrees of Increase, both in Time and Perspicuity. But still, it was at all times sufficient to cause a *Belief of the Mystery*, however obscure and indistinct, yet, such as, in those who liv'd up to the Dispensation they ^{en}was under, *was imputed to them for Righteousness*.

We cannot with any Certainty, at this Distance of time, discover that our first Parents understood, by the *Seed of the Woman*, which was to *bruise the Serpents Head*, any more than a general Promise of a Redeemer, who was to be born of their Race, and who, tho' he was to be *wounded in his Heel*,
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the least considerable part, by the Serpent, should yet *destroy the Power of the Devil*. With what Internal Light God might please to accompany that Revelation, or what explicit Impressions he might make on their Minds concerning the Nature and Office of that Redeemer, in his Delivery of that gracious Promise to 'em; as it does not appear with any Plainness from the account he has given of that Transaction, so I shall not presume to guess: but the Force of the Words, however Figurative and manifestly implying something more than is express'd, seem to Open no more than such a general View.

The Tradition of this Promise continued fresh in the Minds of the Patriarchs before the Flood; was convey'd down, after it, by Noah, through his Posterity; renew'd to Abraham, in his Son *Isaac*; to him, afterwards, in his own Person; and by his Son *Jacob*, after it had been reiterated to him also, at his Death prophetically limited to the Tribe of *Judah*. There was so little time between the Death of his Son *Joseph*, and the Birth of *Moses*, whose Father liv'd with both the One and the Other, that this Promise could not be forgotten at the Deliverance of the *Israelites* from the Land of *Egypt*: and when the Providence of God saw it necessary to preserve this Tradition from that Uncertainty, to which the shortning of Mens Lives made it liable, by committing it to Writings dictated

dictated by the Assistance of his *Holy Spirit*; Then was this *Promise* of a *Redeemer* renew'd to that People; many Circumstances of his Person and Office represented and prefigur'd by various Types and Ceremonies, and the Belief and Expectation of him, by that means woven into the very Body of their Law; strengthen'd and kept up by many lively Prophecies from time to time, such as not only foretold the very Manner, Time, and Place of his Birth, together with several remarkable Particulars of his Life and Death; but give us also such lofty Idea's of the Excellency of his Nature, as cannot, without Blasphemy, be attributed to any Creature.

In these Promises all Holy Men and Women, from the Fall of *Adam*, to the Coming of our Saviour, have founded the Hopes of their Salvation. This has made them Partakers of our Faith; for We have all the same Spirit of Faith, says St. Paul, 2 Cor. 4. 13. and to a long Catalogue of the Faithful through all Ages of the World, he, or whoever else was the Author of that Epistle to the Hebrews, adds, These all dy'd in Faith, not having received the Promises, but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them, Heb. 11. 13.

The full Idea of this Mystery, in that Latitude wherein the Gospel explains it to us, can hardly be supposed to have been open to them. For the first

first Prophecies were short, and in figurative Expressions ; the succeeding ones brought more Light, but it was mostly circumstantial ; the Nature of our Saviour's Kingdom was, in most places, represented under the Image of Temporal Conquests and Deliverances ; and those places which spake most fully of the Nature and Quality of his Person, seem'd so hard to be reconcil'd with that most barbarous Usage of Him, which was foretold in ~~in~~ others, that it was very difficult to frame an entire Notion of it, which would be thoroughly consistent.

Thus much, I presume, may be said of their Faith in this Mystery, without any Danger of being mistaken in it ; That it was proportioned to the measure of the Revelation ; firmly fix'd on the Authority of the Revealer, in so much as they understood of it ; and not shaken or perplex'd with any Doubts or Uncertainties in those parts of it, which, by their being so obscurely discover'd, might justly seem reserv'd to a further Manifestation, at the time of their Accomplishment. It was as a *Light shining in a dark place*, till the *Sun of Righteousness* arose and scatter'd those Clouds ; open'd the dark Prophecies, unveil'd the Types and Figures, and shew'd them plainly the very Person in whom all these center'd, *God manifest in the Flesh*.

Indeed, upon a thorough and serious Consideration of the Writings of the New Testament, it
were

were strange if we should not, with the Disciples on their way to *Emmaus*, feel our Hearts burn within us, brighten'd with that Holy Light which they every where give to this Sublime Mystery: and warm'd with a compassionate Zeal for those perverse unhappy Disputers of this World, who after all that Christ has done and said and suffer'd to make it manifest (to the just Astonishment of Heaven and Earth) cannot, will not understand it!

How fully do they instruct us in the Divinity of his Nature! representing him as a Person distinct from the Father and the Holy Spirit, and yet one with them! speaking of the Prophets, as *prophecy'g by the Spirit of Christ which was in them* 1 Pet. 1. 11. which very Prophets call the Word which came to 'em continually, the Word of *Jehovah*! ascribing to him frequently the Name, the Attributes, the Works, and the Worship of God! There is no possible way of knowing one Nature or Person from another, if these Characters are not allow'd to be sufficiently distinguishing.

Can he be call'd the True God, who is only Improperly so, and in a Figure? Can he be oppos'd to those who by Nature are not Gods, who is himself one only by Office and Designation? Could such an one think it no robbery to be equal with God? Or would any Prince allow of such a Competition in his Minister? By his Office he is delegated by God, and subordinate to him; and therefore can be equal

to him only by his Nature, as he is God over all Blessed for ever.

In the Revelation of St. John 1. 11. we find him thus giving an account of himself; *I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, which is, and which was, and which is to come.* Is this the Character of one who had a Beginning, either just before the Creation, or at his Birth of the Blessed Virgin? How then comes God, in *Isaiah 44. 6.* to claim this incommunicably to himself? *Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, I am the first, and I am the last, and beside me there is no God.* 'Tis the same Prophet who before had styl'd our Saviour, in his noble way of Expression, *Wonderful, Counsellour, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*

By the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, he is said to be the same Yesterday, and to Day, and for Ever, *Heb. 13. 8.* He that is, was, and will always be the same, must have been from Everlasting. An Immutable Being must be above all Force from others, and all Imperfection in it self: He only therefore can be so, who is Almighty and Infinitely Perfect.

To be every where present, is a Power incommunicable to a Creature; yet *Matt. 18. 20.* Our Saviour tells his Disciples, *Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, I am in the midst of you.* And *Matt. 28. 20.* *Lo, I am with you always, to the End of the World.* How could this be after his Body

was

were

was taken up into Heaven, but by the immense unbounded Nature of his Divinity.

Knowledge, indeed, is one of those Attributes, which, in a lower Degree, and by way of Participation, are communicated to Inferiour Beings. But the Knowledge of all Mens Thoughts, as well as Actions; a Knowledge that has no Bounds, but extends to all Things and Times, belongs not to any but an Infinite Being. Yet our Blessed Saviour is to judge all Mens Thoughts and Actions; and therefore they must be known to him: He needed not that any Man should testify of Men, because he himself knew what was in Man, John 2. 25. St. Peter tells him, Lord, thou knowest all things, John 21. 17. The Disciples say the same thing to him, John 16. 30. and very consequentially infer from thence, By this we know that thou camest from God. And our Saviour is so far from blaming that Position, or the Inference thus made from it, that he at the same time confirms their Belief in him on that very Ground.

The Creation of the World is an Act so properly Divine, that even Natural Reason cannot adjudge it to any other than the Supreme Being. But if that were capable of any doubt, the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has positively decided it, Heb. 3. 4. that He that built all things is God: and St. Paul has as expressly said of our Saviour. Col. 1. 16. That by him were all things created that are in Heaven,

and that are in Earth; whether they be Thrones, or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers, all things were created by him, and for him.

Adoration is that Homage, which is particularly owing to the Maker of the World; due to Infinite Perfection, and confin'd to it; challeng'd by God as his peculiar Right, and forbidden to be pay'd to any other. Invocation, is an Acknowledgment of Infinite Power, Knowledge and Goodness. How then does St. Stephen at his Death, pray the Lord Jesus to receive his Spirit? How are all the Angels command'd to worship him? Heb. 1. 6. All Men to honour him, as they honour the Father? John 5. 23. How does every Creature which is in Heaven, and on the Earth, and under the Earth, give Blessing, Glory, Honour and Power to the Lamb, as well as to him that sitteth upon the Throne for ever and ever? God will not give his Glory to another; so that, if he has given his Glory to our Saviour (as 'tis plain he has) then is not our Saviour another, but one and the same with him.

It were endless to run through all the Passages in the New Testament, which conspire in giving Evidence to the Divinity of our Blessed Saviour, or the wretched Shifts and Evasions which are made use of to elude the Force of 'em. When not only the most Incommunicable Names, by which God has been pleas'd to make himself known unto Men, in Contradiction to all false Gods, or such as are figuratively call'd so; when not only these are so frequently ascrib'd

ascrib'd to him, but they are circumstantiated and attended with those *Attributes*, those *Works*, that *Glory* and *Worship*, which inseparably and properly appertain only to the *Divine Nature*; it is not conceivable that in the last and fullest, and plainest *Revelation* of the Will of God, the Son of God and all his Holy Apostles should have been (to say no more) so unwary and improvident in the Choice of those Words whereby they were to convey that Will of God to us; that our Saviour should express himself so loosely, his Apostles understand him so ill; or their Followers, them; as to lead the whole Church of God for 1700 Years into the grossest Idolatry; as they must have done, if our Saviour be not, what I hope it is in some measure prov'd, we have sufficient Reason to believe him, in the strictest Propriety of Speech, by Nature God.

The same Holy Scriptures do as plainly inform us, That this Divine Person was made *Flesh* and dwelt among us, and we beheld his *Glory*, as the *Glory* of the only begotten of the Father: That he was made *Sin* for us, that we might be made the *Righteousness* of God in him: That he took part of the same *Flesh* and *Blood* with us, that he might destroy him, that had the *Power of Death*, that is, the Devil: That he gave himself for an *Offering* and *Sacrifice* to God, a *Propitiation* for the *Sins* of the whole World: and therefore St. Paul calls the Church, *The Church of God* which he hath purchased with his own *Blood*; Acts 20. 28. So distinctly has

has the Holy Ghost, with so much Plainness and Perspicuity describ'd the *Two Natures* in our Blessed Saviour, the *Design* and *End* of their Union, and the *Execution* of that Design, with the Blessed *Effects* of it, that the strictest Reason founded upon Principles of Revelation, the only proper Rule for it to act by, cannot but give up its firm Assent to it.

The *Manner* of this Union, it must be confess'd, will be still unsearchable; but it is the *Fact* alone which we are requir'd to believe; and neither its being undiscoverable by *Natural Reason*, nor the *Darkness* of the Revelation in the first Ages, nor the remaining *Obscurity*, as to the *Manner* of it, are *Objections* of any weight to the *Belief* of this *Mystery*, now the *Fact* is so fully and authentically reveal'd.

Reason will and ought to judge of the *Truth* of a Revelation, and distinguish by its proper Characters, between the *Reality* and the *Pretence* of it. But it has not the same Right to judge of the *Things* reveal'd, when they are in their own Nature above the reach of its Powers to discover. If Reason cou'd afford us any Principles for the judging of this *Mystery*, one would think the same Principles might have been sufficient to find it out: But 'tis the height of Impudence and Injustice to pretend to decide of a Matter which it knows nothing of; as it is a very ridiculous and a very peevish kind of Ignorance, to reject the clearest Light from the most indubitable Authority, in a Business of the greatest Importance

before the QUEEN.

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to our Happiness, for the very *Reason* which ought to move us most earnestly to seek and to acquiesce in it, because we find, and must acknowledge our selves to be entirely in the Dark. *Reason* has very fairly and sufficiently discharg'd its Office, when it has brought us to a Revelation which enlarges its Views, and has no cause to refuse a Succour that upbraids its Weakness by no other Means, but the Abundance of its Supply and Assistance.

When the *Revelation* of the *Fact* itself was *obscure* and *indistinct*, there might seem to be some colourable Ground for Complaint, if God had been a Debtor to Man for that Light which he himself extinguish'd by his wilful Transgression; or, if God had requir'd of him such a Belief of this Truth, as exceeded the Proportion of its Manifestation. But the making of a new *Covenant* with Man, whose Destruction was from himself, was not any way due from the Justice of God; but an Act only of Infinite Compassion in him: And the Faith of those Holy Men, who preceeded the Times of the Gospel, was accepted, through Christ, for its being *firm* and *unshaken*, rather than *clear* and *distinct*. They saw his Day through a *Glass* darkly, but yet, they saw it and rejoic'd. The Law was only a *Shadow* of good Things to come, and not the very *Image* of the Things themselves: and even this Cloud, which was over that Revelation, was ministerial to its Accomplishment, and to the making it evident to us.

FOR

For when our Blessed Saviour, at last, appear'd in the Flesh; the *Jews*, as was foretold of 'em, despis'd and rejected him: Yet they were to preserve those Prophecies which gave Evidence to both these Facts, and made their *Testimony* of more Force to the *Gentiles*, for when the way was thus open'd for the calling 'em to the Faith: Had the Description of our Saviour, by the account of his *Person*, his *Office*, and his *Kingdom*, been as Historical and as Uniform to them, as that which his Apostles have delivered to us: The Prejudices concerning a *Temporal Saviour*, would not have stood in the way to the Conversion of the most Carnal *Jews*: And had the *Jews* been all converted by our Saviour, we could have had only doubtful Witnesses, as to the Uncorruptness of the Prophetical Writings which foretold him; since all they who were to have been Witnesses to this Truth, would also have been Parties to it, and mightily interested in it. But the Testimony of those *Jews* will be wholly unexceptionable; who together with those Prophecies concerning him, deliver to us such also as expressly foretel, both their rejecting him, and his rejecting them. So that this *Light*, however weak it appear'd then to them, confirm'd and harden'd in their Sins, was sufficient to those which were *Israelites indeed*, and the *Day-star* arose in their *Hearts*: And we have therefore all the Reason in the World, instead of complaining of that *Obscurity* which cover'd him

in part from the *Fathers*, and hid him wholly from the *Carnal Jews*; to praise and magnifie the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of God, who even out of that *Darkness* has rais'd us up such great *Light*; and to fix on him our *Faith* clearly and steadily, in proportion to the *Strength*, and the *Brightness* of his *Rising*.

For the *Mystery* is not less certain, because the *Manner* of it is hitherto *unknown*, and (if we may guess by the *Attempts* which have been made that way) will be ever in this *Life* *undiscoverable*. 'Tis in vain to search for *Knowledge* where it is not to be had; and 'tis as weak a thing to distrust the *Discoveries* which have been made to us, because we are at a stand, and can go no farther. The *Manner* of almost every thing in *Nature*, either of its *Being* or its *Acting*, is unknown to the strictest and most diligent *Enquirers*: yet we are content not to call the *Existence* of any thing into *Doubt*, because we know not *how it is*, or *can be*, when our *Senses* have once assur'd us that it is.

Now *Revelation* is to our *Faith*, as our *Senses* are to our *Knowledge*; both agree in giving full *Assurance* of the *Things* which they represent to us; and the *Certainty* of both depends upon the same *Principle*; that the *God of Truth* has not made us on purpose to be deceiv'd. Why then are we so equitable in our *Natural Knowledge*, and so unreasonable in *Religion*? This is a *Mystery* which the *Adversaries* of our *Faith* are concern'd to give us an

account of, and if we have their leave to be at quiet till that Task is perform'd, we shall be well enough at Ease and Unmolested. We may easily give em up the Metaphysical Speculations, with which the wanton Fancies of Men have dress'd up this Truth, the Divinity which our Saviour Christ and his Apostles taught us is plain and practical, design'd not to amuse our Curiosity, but to reform our Lives, and to build us up in his most Holy Faith. When we refine too nicely upon the Matter of his Commands, we are apt to distinguish our selves out of our Obedience to em. And when we speculate too subtly on the Manner of those Mysteries which he has reveal'd; the Weakness of those Theories, saps the very Foundation of our Faith. A strong and bold, or sportive Imagination, is in both Cases equally Ruinous. In the one, it weakens that Assent which is due to his Truth; as, in the other, it lessens that Obedience which is due to his Authority.

In a word, to conclude; Neither Nature nor Reason could perform or discover the Redemption of lost Man, by any Power or Light of its own. It was the good Will of God therefore to reveal this Mercy wrought by the Incarnation of his only Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The most ancient Revelations were in general Terms, and made way by Degrees for clearer Explanations. But in the fulness of time the Veil was done away, and God was manifest in the Flesh; his infinite Perfections challenging the Worship due

to em, and both those Incommunicable Perfections, and that Commanded Worship proving the Divinity of his Nature, after the Assumption of ours; his Works justifying the Truth of his Gospel, and his Gospel enjoining the Belief of this Mystery, as the Means of our Salvation; and all this in a way suitable to his Goodness, and our Necessity; to his Wildom, and to our Capacity.

With what Admiration, with what Gratitude, with what Love and Zeal should the Contemplation of this Holy Myltery inflame our Hearts! How should it convince us of the Insolence of that Curiosity which would sound the Depths of Infinite Wisdom, and of the Vanity of that Carnal Reason, which would presume to determine the Bounds and Limits of its Communications to Men! How should it cast down Imaginations, and every thing that exalteth itself against the Knowledge of God, and bring into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Faith!

In what odious Colours does it represent our Sins, which stood in need of a Satisfaction of such infinite Value! and in how bright a Light does it set out to us the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of our mighty Deliverer! A Light to us that sat in Darkness, and in the shadow of Death, to guide our Feet into the way of Peace.

Seeing therefore we have this Hope, and have tasted the Good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, with open face beholding, as in a Glass, the Glory of

of God: Let us be diligent that we be found of him without spot, and blameless. Let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering (for he is faithful that promised) and while the Unlearned and Unstable wrest the Scriptures to their own Destruction, let us beware, lest we also being led away with the Error of the Wicked, fall from our own Steadfastness; but grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To Him, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, Three Persons and One God, be all Honour and Glory, now and for ever. Amen.

F I N I S

By the same Author, Printed for Tho. Bennet, at the Half-Moon in St. Paul's Church-yard.

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517
7
A
SERMON
Mr. Brownlow's
SERMON

Preach'd at
Steving in SUSSEX,

January the 23^d. 170³₄.

By William Brownlow,
Curate of Steving

LONDON Printed, and Sold by J. Holt, at
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Mr. Thompson's

SERMON

PRINTED BY



Stepping in the USSEX.

London the 24. 1703.

515
21
A 694.9.18.
210
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

Steyning in S U S S E X,

On Sunday, January 23. 170 $\frac{3}{4}$.

Before the Right Honourable
Thomas Viscount Windfor,

A N D

Samuel Sambrook, Esq;

Then Candidates for the Burrough
of *Brambar in Suffex.*

By *William Brownsword,*
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18
A
S E R M O N

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stepping in 2 U 2 E X,

On Sunday, January 23. 1704.

Before the Right Honourable

Thomas Viscount Windsor,



Samuel Sampson, Eld;

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of Bramham in Suffex.

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Audience, now humbly begs for

that of your View.

Your Lordship has been pleas'd

to Express something of an Esteem

for it is to be

made Publick In Compliance

therefore with your Lordship's Re-

quest, I have at last prevail'd with

of Exposing my self in Print, than

to let the World be Ignorant of

this Branch of your Lordship's

Character, viz. Your Encourag-

ment of Learning, and of those

who make the least Effays towards

had some Time ago

the Honour of your Lordship's

Audience,

and all my

Feal

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Audience, now humbly sues for
that of your View.

Your Lordship has been pleas'd
to Express something of an Esteem
for it, and to Desire it might be
made Publick. In Compliance
therefore with your Lordship's Re-
quest, I have at last prevail'd with
my self, rather to run the Risque
of Exposing my self in Print, than
to let the World be Ignorant of
this Branch of your Lordship's
Character, viz. Your Encourage-
ment of Learning, and of those
who make the least Essays towards
it.
All the Danger, and all my
Fear

()

~~Fear is left, while I Publish your~~
 Lordship's Candour and Genero-
 sity, I should unluckily, at the
 same time, occasion a Reflection
 upon your Judgment, as having
 miscalculated in your Opinion of
 this Piece.

~~However,~~ my Lord, I have
 Guarded as well as I can against
 such a Stroke as this, which I am
 sensible wou'd fall heavy upon my
 Shoulders, and only touch your
 Lordship at the Rebound.

I have Review'd it often, and
 Submitted it to the Censure of
 judicious, and (I hope) Impartial
 Friends.

Such